INDIAN TEXTILES

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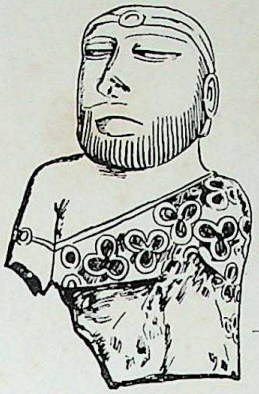
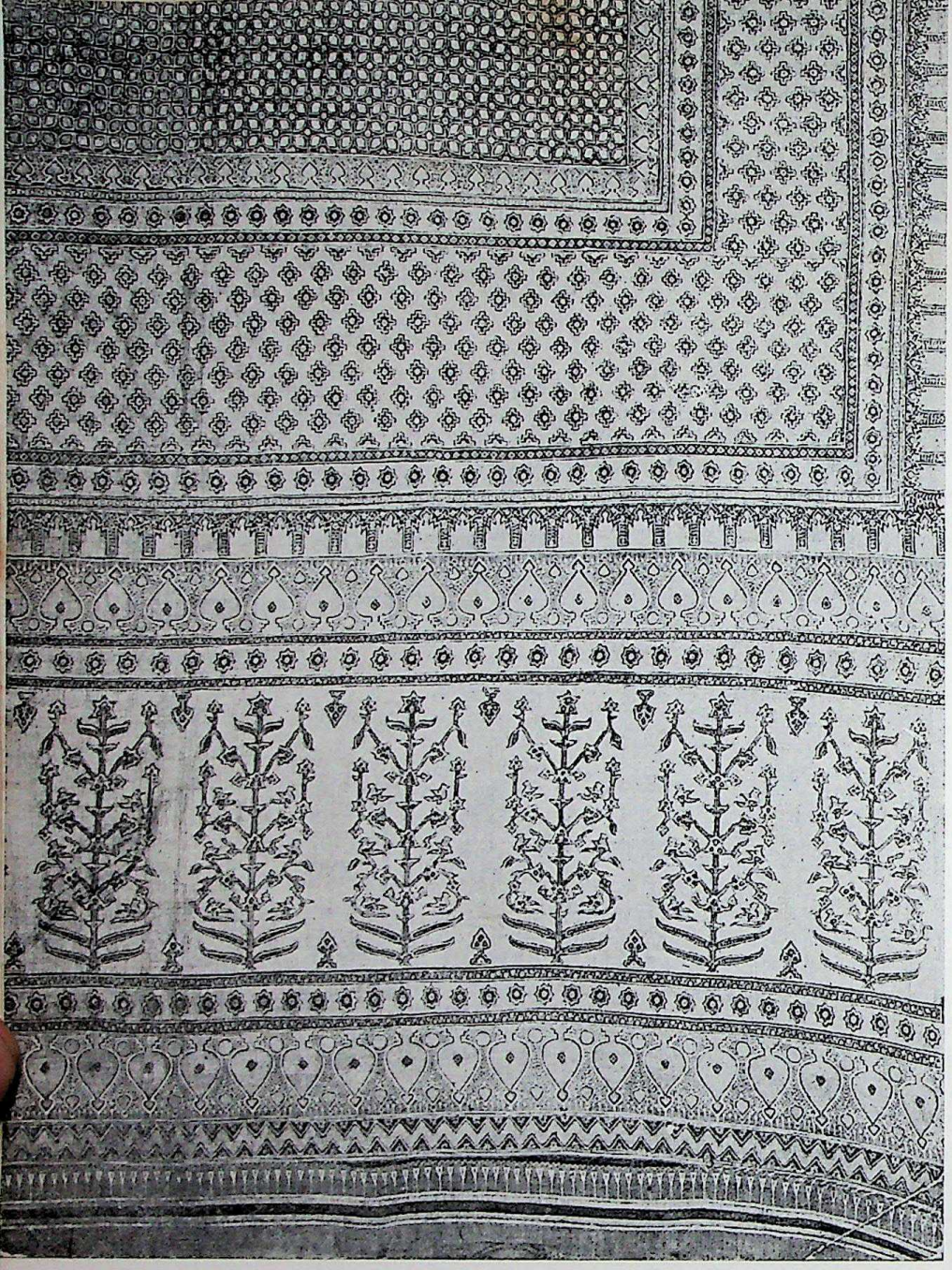


Food and clothes—these have been the primary needs of man since the beginning of creation. The satisfaction of hunger is no doubt the strongest urge in a living being; but no less strong are the urges to cover his nakedness, to protect himself from the inclemencies of nature and to beautify his person according to his means and taste. The making of cloth may hence be regarded as one of the earliest industries of the world.

In India, too, the textile art is very old. Cotton spinning and cotton weaving go back to the earliest recorded days of her civilization. Cotton fabrics have been found in the excavations at Mohenjodaro, the ruins of which, as is well known today, are attributed to the 3rd millennium B.C. The word *Sindhu*, apparently meaning cotton, indicates that the Sindh valley was the land of origin of this basic staple and that cotton products were being exported even in those remote days. Herodotus, the famous Greek historian of the 5th century B.C., alludes to cotton when he speaks of a kind of "tree-wool exceeding in beauty and excellence that of sheep" as being made into garments by the Indians. Following him, other classical writers frequently refer to the use of this "wool" as clothing by Indians. Cotton weave is the special product of India and she is famous throughout the world for her fine cotton muslins, known by such poetic names as 'woven air', 'running water' and 'evening dew'.

The mention of silk and silkworms is also found in the early epics of India. Silk has been the special product of China; but it is possible that it was introduced into India long before the age of the epics. The Indians also turned this material into a highly specialized craft and Indian silk products were prized greatly in other countries until recent times. The use of wool, another important raw material for woven textiles, also has a very ancient history in India, for the Vedas frequently refer to woollen yarns as covering for the body. Hemp, jute and other substitutes for flax are also known to have been used in India in ancient times.

It is not only the textile art which is ancient in India. No people or country in the world has such a rich heritage of beautiful costumes and fabrics. Millenniums before the birth of Christ, Indian cotton products were exported to the West. Weaving was already a highly developed art in the period of the Rigveda where we find reference



Silk sari *from Tanjore*

not only to weavers and weaving thread but also to a shining, gold-woven cloak. In the *manichira* of the Mahabharata there is reference to a fabric with a pearl-woven fringe. That such costly articles were manufactured in those ancient days is clear from the accounts of certain classical writers who frequently speak of Indian flowered robes and cloths of pure gold. Pali literature and the Arthasastra of Kautilya speak of Indian textile products, such as the famous fabrics of Banaras, known as *kaseyaka*, worth a hundred-thousand silver pieces, and the soft muslin of Bengal, known as *vangaka*, which was highly prized in the luxurious courts of the West. Kalidasa and Bana both refer to richly patterned articles of apparel and the paintings of Ajanta give us a vivid idea of contemporary fashion, where the finest muslins and silks—plain, striped, and gorgeously ornamented with figures and flowers—were used. Indian printed cottons have been found in Central Asia, and a particular specimen with a floral repeat, discovered by Stein, might belong to a period as early as the 8th century A.D. In the 10th century, Arab traders carried on an extensive trade in Indian textiles and it is through them that the beautiful fabrics of India found their way to the West and to the East and became the inspiration for many local styles and patterns wherever they went.

The above references clearly point to the magnificence of the Indian textile art in days before the Muslim conquest. Indian textiles had already created a reputation throughout the then civilized world. References to this art during the period of the Delhi Sultans are somewhat scanty, but it is apparent that its tradition continued. The coming of the Mughals, their cultured patronage and wider outlook gave the textile art a fresh impetus. New techniques were invented and new designs and varieties, characterized by a profuse display of colours and costly materials, were introduced. These textiles were remarkable for their fineness of texture, the intricacy and flawless execution of their patterns, their harmonious colours which were produced in a variety of ways and their lavish use of gold and silver. Even in the time of Akbar the variety of Indian textile products was so wide that Abul Fazl, in giving a list only of the principal items, covers several pages of the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Bernier, Tavernier, Streynsham Master and other foreign travellers all refer to the great variety, beauty and excellence of Indian fabrics produced in those days. With the coming of the European traders, the demand for Indian products in Europe increased. Such names as *muslin*, *calico*, *chintz*, *cramoisy*, *bandana*, *pintado*, *palampore*, and *calmendar*, which had a high value in European markets, are all of Indian origin. Various companies were founded exclusively for the trade of Indian goods in Europe, which had previously been a monopoly of Arab merchants. In one of Moliere's plays, an actor robes himself in an "indienne" because persons of quality were expected to do so. This amply testifies to the fashion in Europe for Indian textile products. Indeed, so great was the popularity of Indian textiles, that to protect local industries both France and England had to adopt penal laws to prevent the entry of Indian goods in these countries.

Now the tables have turned and the Indian textile art, which has had so brilliant a record for millenniums, is past history. The advent of the machine along with other

causes stifled this art and only a very small vestige of this glorious tradition now remains. Old specimens of textiles are becoming a rarity with time and today very few museums can have a truly representative collection. The magnificent publication by Forbes Watson, Birdwood's *Industrial Art of India*, the several interesting and informative articles in the *Indian Art Journal* and the catalogues of several exhibitions, including one held at Delhi in 1903, tried to put on record the achievements of this fast dying art. Within recent years, too, there has been a reawakening of interest in our textile tradition. These are hopeful signs, for it is time to take stock of our textile art. The scope of the present publication does not permit a comprehensive

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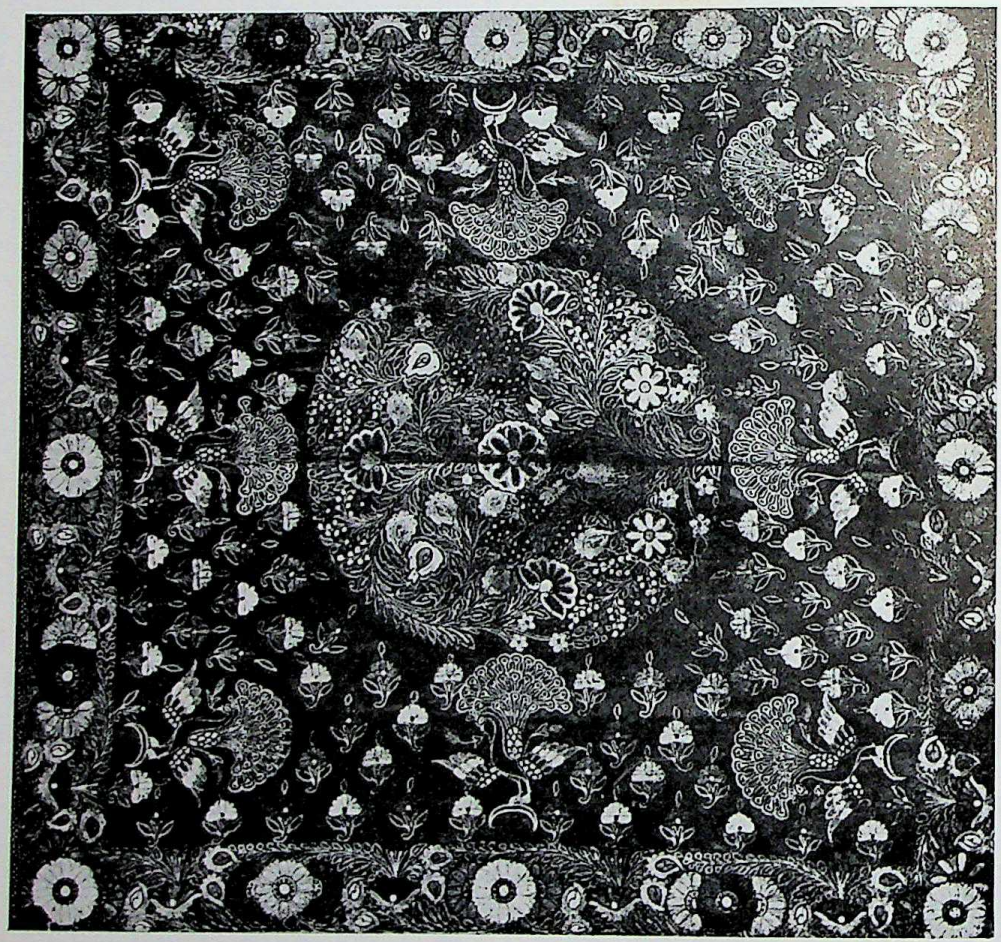
Embroidered rumal *from Kathiawar*



account of the subject, but an attempt has been made to review the principal varieties of Indian textiles available, their special qualities, and their modes of manufacture.

The field of Indian textiles is a very extensive one and for a better understanding of this complex subject it is desirable to make some classifications at the outset. Broadly, Indian textiles may be divided into two groups—plain and patterned. The patterned ones may be further classified according to the way in which the patterns are produced. These can be studied under two main heads:

1. Those textiles in which artistic treatment is given subsequent to the weaving, and
2. those in which artistic treatment is given while they are on the loom.

The first includes all textiles which issue plain from the loom and receive their decoration and final treatment at the hands of the dyer, the printer or the embroiderer. The second refers to those materials in which the decoration is woven into the fabric, either through the manipulation of the loom, or as in tapestries by means of an additional shuttle, which is a simple pencil of bamboo (needle, as it is called by the weavers) that is taken in and out of a fixed number of threads of the warp. The decoration thus forms an integral part of the process of manufacture. The only drawback in this method, and one which is inherent in case of all artificial products, is that overlapping is unavoidable so that a loom-patterned fabric may afterwards have to be further treated by the dyer or the embroiderer. In the case of a Kashmir shawl, for instance, it is sometimes impossible to say how much is loom-work and how much the work of the embroiderer. Nevertheless, the classification, as suggested above, may be found to be workable for a general study of this art. To quote Watt, "Embroidery is in fact to the textiles what enamelling and damascening are to the metals".

The plain fabrics of India were no less famous than her decorated ones and it was chiefly on the fineness of the weave and the texture that this fame rested. A variety of plain materials were woven all over the country, ranging from thick-set strong gauzes to the finest of tissues like muslin. Muslin represents the highest achievement of the cotton-weaving industry in India. No other country has been able to excel the great beauty and extreme delicacy of these fine textures. Plain muslin was at one time produced everywhere in the north as well as in the south; but the most famous weaves are those of Dacca which have won a signal reputation all over the world. It is not without reason that they have received such poetic names as *ab-i-rawan* or 'running water' (because if placed in a stream it could scarcely be seen), *bafta hava* or 'woven air' (because if thrown in the air it would float like a cloud), and *shabnam* or 'dew' (because it could hardly be seen if placed on grass wet with dew). The last named was woven of yarn so fine as to require 250 miles of it to weigh a pound. The finest muslin of Dacca was called *mulmul khas* for its fineness and delicacy made it suitable only for regal attire. Usually made in pieces measuring ten yards by one yard, it contained from 1,000 to 1,800 threads in the warp, and a price of Rs. 500 to Rs. 600 per piece was not considered exorbitant. The story of Aurangzeb rebuking his daughter because she appeared unclothed before him, although she was wrapped in seven folds of muslin, Tavernier's account of the present to Shah Safy

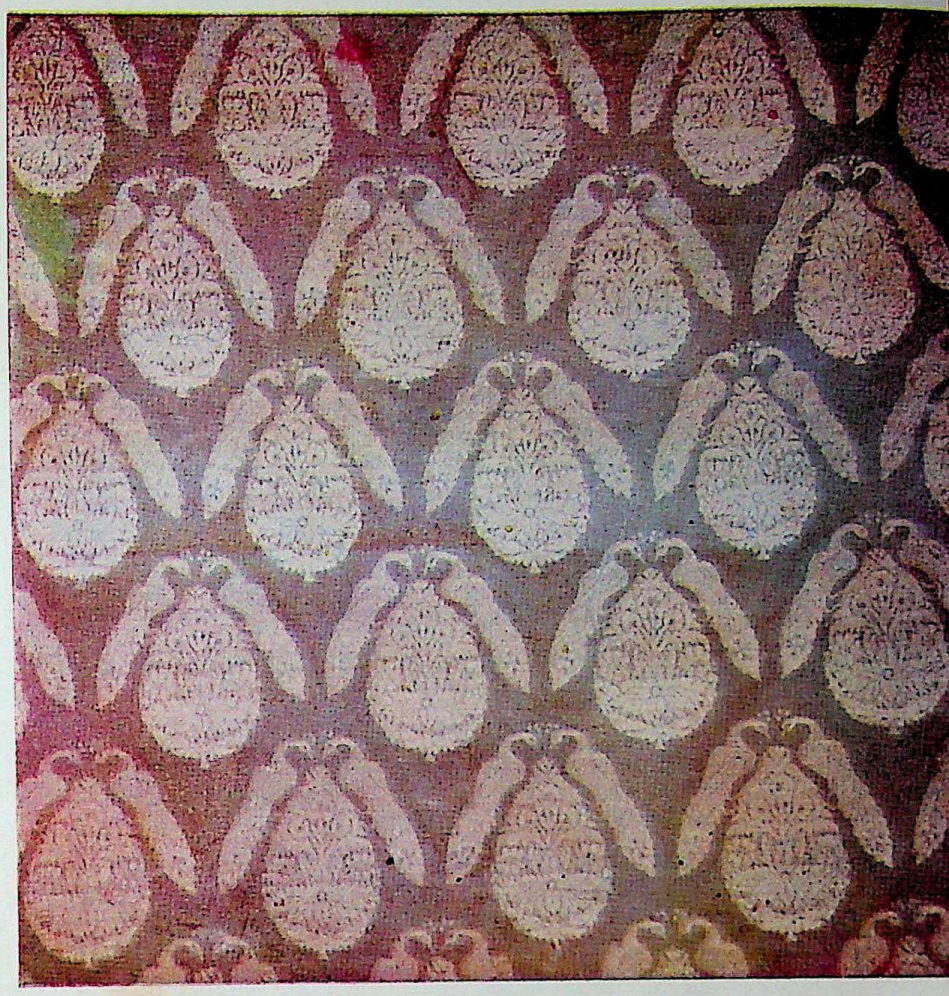
of a muslin turban 15 yards long and one yard wide that could scarcely be felt by the touch, and many other such anecdotes give some idea of the exquisite fineness and delicacy of the muslin weaves of Dacca. Early Indian sculptures also testify to the use of garments made of muslin so transparent that, but for the edges and folds of the material, the figures seem to be practically nude.

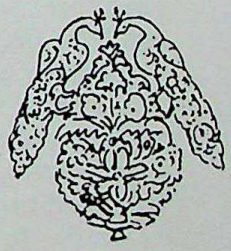
The superiority of the Dacca weave was not attributable to the excellence of raw material—since Indian cotton is not only short but coarse in staple—but to the infinite skill of the spinners and to the great care bestowed on every part of the process. The spindle, and not the spinning wheel, is used in spinning threads for the fine and delicate muslins, and the spindle itself is weighted only with a pinch of wet clay so that it accurately controls the tension. It is only in a moist atmosphere that such fine threads can be spun. The spinning is, therefore, done during the rainy season, or early in the morning and in the evening, sometimes over a shallow vessel of water so that the evaporation thus caused imparts the necessary degree of moisture. Otherwise the delicate threads are liable to snap, either while laying the warp or on the loom. The exquisite beauty of the Dacca muslins proves the Indian dictum that the first, the best and the most perfect of instruments is the human hand. No mechanical invention, however delicate, could surpass the fine muslin weaves of Dacca.

India has all the raw materials needed for producing a great variety of colours. Vegetable dyes and fugitive colours have been the chief materials of the dyer's art in India, although people also knew how to make their colours fast. The Indian dyer (*rangrez*) could not only dye every colour, but also its various shades. Plain dyeing was as extensive as the country itself and particular localities developed such complicated processes as double-dyeing and tie-dyeing to a high level of perfection. In Bengal sombre tints are usually favoured, but the rest of India goes in for gay colours. Rajasthan and central India are known for the special skills that were developed there in the art of dyeing. Double-dyeing is known to have been practised in parts of Rajasthan and at Yeola near Nasik. By this process the two sides of the fabric appear to be of different colours. In another process which involves dyeing the warp and the weft threads in different colours, the finished textile changes colour according to the angle at which it is viewed. Tie-dyeing was also a highly developed local art in Rajasthan and will be dealt with presently.

Of the various forms of artistic treatment a fabric receives after it is taken off the loom, printing is the most common. There are various methods of printing ranging from printing in black on white with wooden blocks to working with paints entirely by hand with or without the use of resist. Block printing is also done in many colours and combined with dye-painting. The techniques of printing or painting are almost exclusively applied to cotton, and the materials thus produced are used for garments, bedcovers and hangings of all kinds.

The simplest of the processes consists in pressing a pattern on lengths of cotton by means of a wooden stamp. If the fabric is to be dyed, the printed patterns are covered with a resist paste before it is dipped in the dye. A slight but ingenious



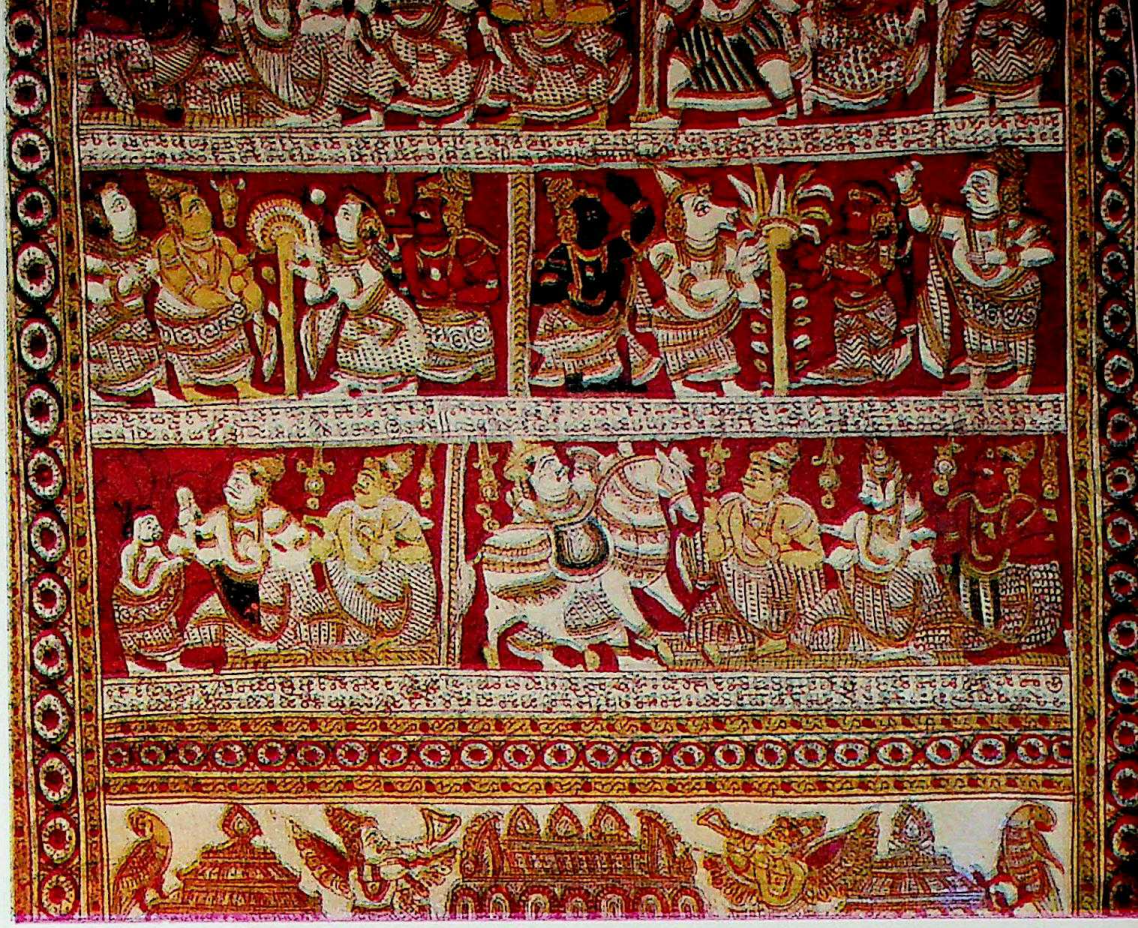


Banaras kinkhob *with bold floral sprays and peacock figures worked in silver thread*

variation of this process is the printing of the designs in a resist paste by means of wooden blocks before dyeing. When the resist paste is removed the patterns appear in white on a coloured ground. Many coloured patterns are produced by using a separate block for each colour. Indeed, pattern-printing and resist-dyeing go together and the variations these processes lend themselves to show that this art is not as simple as it might at first seem. In many parts of the country stamped designs are finished or made more elaborate by the free use of the artist's brush. Sometimes brilliant patterns are produced on fabrics entirely by hand-painting. Wax prints in which the designs are drawn in hot bees-wax with a brush or pencil (*qalam*) made of steel wires represent a specialized technique. The wax penetrates the material and protects the design from the dye when the fabric is dipped in the dye vat, the process being repeated for each colour when designs in many colours are desired. This technique has spread to Java where it is known as the *batik* although the tools used there are different. Tinsel-printing is another ingenious craft in which the design is stamped on the fabric in a preparation of oil mixed with fine powdered lime. Over the adhesive pattern thus formed are pressed colour materials like gold leaf, silver leaf, tin foil, mercury amalgam, etc. The colours which are applied there naturally adhere to the patterns and since the design stands a little above the surface of the fabric the result is practically a form of *gesso*. Combinations of these different methods of printing are also not uncommon where intricacies of colours and patterns are desired. Materials produced by these methods, known variously as calico, chintz, *calmendar*, etc., in Europe so captivated its fancy that laws prohibiting the importation of these articles had to be enacted in some of the countries for the protection of locally manufactured cloth.

The patterns used for printing textiles can be classified according to the region in which they are manufactured. The designs generally used in the north are quite distinct from those current in the south, but the beauty of pattern and colour is remarkable everywhere in the country.

In the north, Uttar Pradesh, Panjab and Rajasthan are reputed for their printed textiles. The products of Uttar Pradesh may be divided into two broad groups, according to the somewhat dissimilar processes by which they are produced. Farukkhabad, Bulandshahr (Jahangirabad), etc., manufacture elegant fabrics bearing minute and complex patterns, usually in two harmonizing colours. The central design represents the well-known Persian motif of the tree of life bordered by broad bands consisting of festoons of flowers, encircling cones or conventional facades and balconies. These designs are printed by means of blocks. At Jafraganj, near Fatehpur, one finds a completely different style where the entire ground is filled in with intricate patterns, mostly floral in character. The borders are composed of medallions of flowers within broad bands of red and blue, and the interspaces filled in with Arabic lettering in black or white. The patterns are originally printed on the ground by means of blocks, but the details are subsequently touched up with the brush. In this kind of work, a beautiful shade of blue dominates the colour design. In fact, the use of the brush in this kind of material raises the craft to a high



Hand printed cotton from north Arcot depicting episodes from mythology

Portion of a border, highlighting the design of kalkas, *from a printed cotton shawl from Tanjore*

A richly decorated cotton jajim *from Panjab displaying a fine blending of foliage, animal and bird motifs in the ground design*

A simply patterned printed cotton from Chingleput

level of artistry and the product may perfectly well be described as painted work. The boldness and freedom with which the design is worked is in pleasing contrast to the severity and conventionality of the products of Farukkhabad and Bulandshahr. Prints produced in Panjab are remarkable for their colours and the skilful manner in which their array of minute patterns is executed. The designs are small in scale and consist almost entirely of foliage and flower patterns, sometimes interspersed with figures of birds, squirrels and other animals. Occasionally, the stamped patterns are touched up with the brush. The broad borders are usually in deeper colours and are composed of boldly patterned flowers, either in the form of medallions or running scrolls. A strikingly graceful style of printing is peculiar to Sultanpur. The central field is dyed in a pale colour and then printed over in terracotta red with a pattern of arabesques. The latter serves as background for a closely compacted tracery of floral or foliage patterns which appear as though they were doubly outlined. The entire composition is the result of block-printing and the effect produced by the soft harmony of warm colours is most pleasing.

A vast variety of modes and styles characterizes the print-craft of Rajasthan and central India, but only one or two well-known methods might be considered here. The most common form of decoration is the use of tiny 'spot' patterns, or repeats of floral bunches or cones, usually on a pure white or pale pink ground. Another speciality of Rajasthan is the production of small printed strips which the purchaser can use in many ways. Of particular interest are the Sanganir prints, where the fabric is usually dyed on both sides and the patterns printed in such a way that they appear as vividly on the under-surface as on the upper. The patterns consist of graceful sprays of flowers or of flame cones built up of flowers repeated all over the surface, usually in a diagonal fashion, on a pale and harmonious background. In Jodhpur and Jaipur the patterns are closely compacted in parallel bands arranged length-wise on a ground colour of dark Indian red, or of moss green or dull blue. The designs are usually geometric, but occasionally one comes across diagonal bands of flowers.

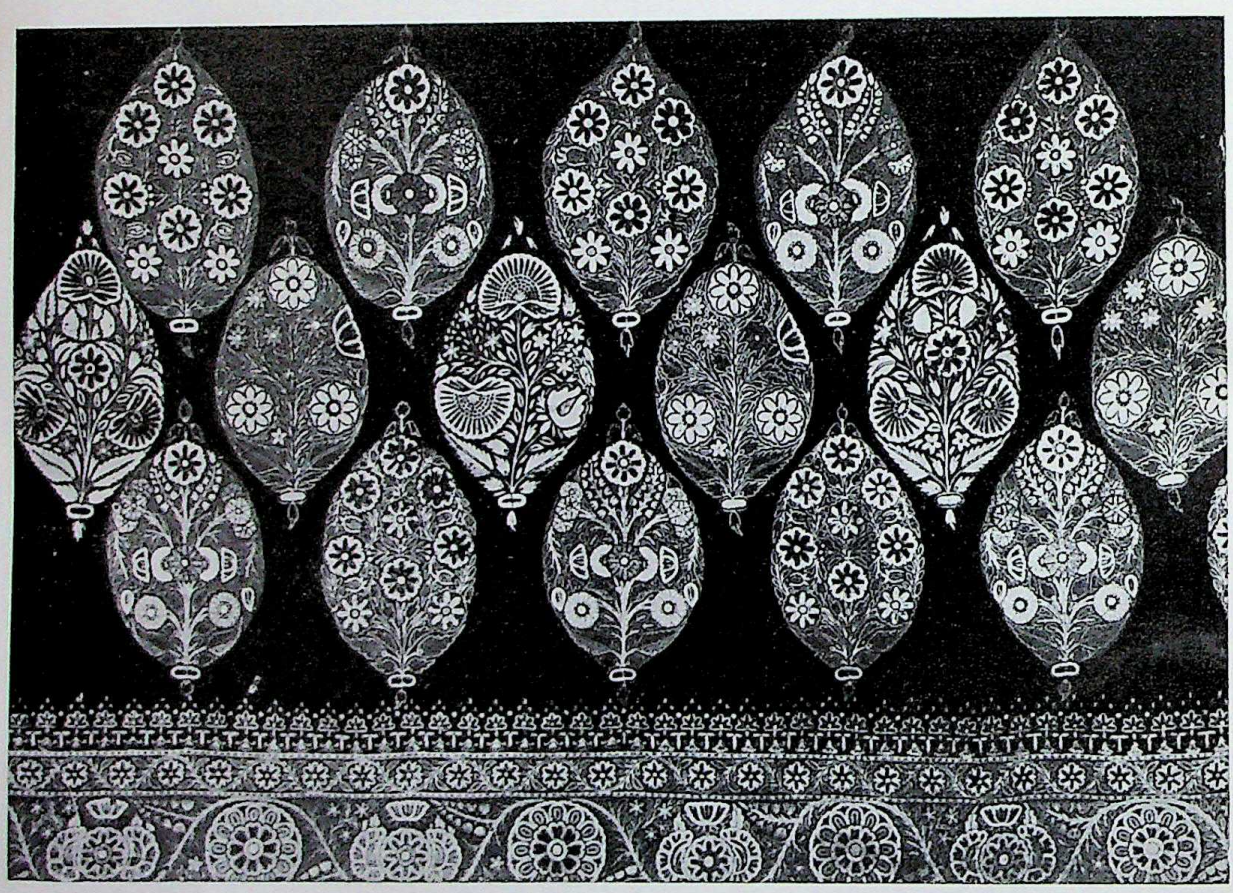
Western India has several famous centres of textile printing. In this part of the country, the use of a resist paste is quite common. Faded colours and dull effects, mostly in lemon yellow, green, brick-red or orange, are usually the rule, although in Baroda and Kaira blue-black and dark green are also used. The ground pattern generally consists of minute specks with borders and end-pieces which are brilliantly coloured in stripes and bands. Coloured rosettes, flowering trees, or medallions adorn the middle of the field. In the Maratha country, however, woven patterns are preferred to printed ones, although Khandesh, Dharwar and Nasik are noted for their textile prints.

The printed fabrics of southern India are bolder and more brightly coloured than those in any other part of India. Of the various methods of printing current in southern India, brush colouring with wax as a resist is the chief method, whereas block printing has played a comparatively subordinate role. The technique of wax printing has already been briefly described. In many parts of the south, the wax

print, often combined with elaborate brush work, is in vogue. The large designs meant for hand painting are very often stencilled on the fabric by pouncing through pricked paper plates.

The printed textiles thus produced are known variously as *calmdar* or *calmendar* as they are produced by the *qalam* or brush and *palampore* from *palangposh*, or bedspread, for which purpose these were largely produced. Of these the most distinctive products are those of Masulipatam, which has been noted for its textiles for centuries. Kalahasti in North Arcot, Chingleput in Kokanada and Tanjore, all have an individual style of their own. In the main design of Masulipatam textiles which are essentially of the prayer carpet type, Islamic motifs, such as the Persian tree of life, panels in the shape of *mihrab* arches, and floral patterns are used. The prevailing colours are blue (indigo) and red (madder) with green, yellow and black on an ivory-white ground. The elegant example reproduced here illustrates a rather rare type of Masulipatam work. Kalahasti in North Arcot

Embroidered velvet from Kutch with a floral motif worked in gold and silver thread

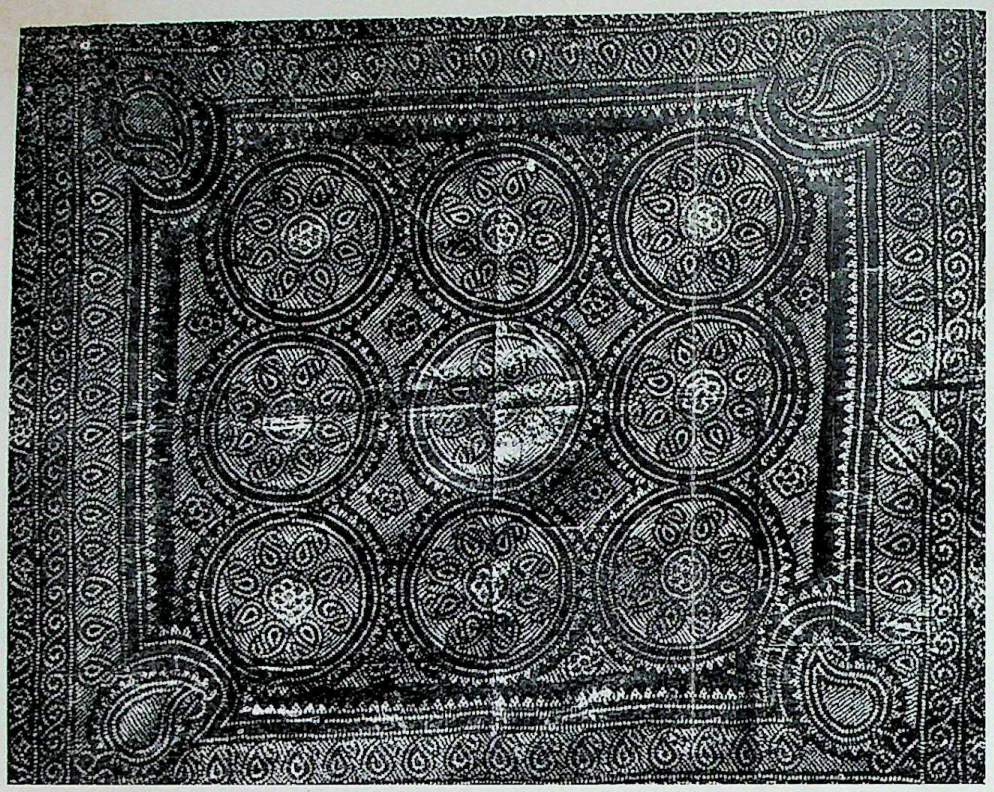


produces textiles intended for temple canopies, and mythological themes from the epics and the Puranas appear in bright colours in the patterns. The colour scheme often consists of blue, buff, red and yellow. Indeed, such fabrics have the appearance of brilliantly coloured paintings, executed by a combination of processes such as stamping, waxing, and brush work. In conception as well as in purpose these materials may be compared to the gay temple banners of Nepal and Tibet. The Chingleput and Tanjore fabrics are both distinctive in their own way, and though the designs are different they are produced in much the same manner as those described above, and their warm tints are just as pleasing. Wax printing is known in Kathiawar and central India also, but their products cannot claim to be as effective as those of southern India, where brush work is resorted to to impart perfect finish and distinctiveness to the print.

Various processes of tinsel-printing, combined with other methods, are practised in many parts of India. Sometimes the patterns are so charmingly executed that the fabric has the appearance of being embroidered rather than printed. The products of Delhi and Panjab are characterized by a ground with patterns of a bright colour in which are printed patterns of flowers and closely compacted cones. Sometimes Sanganir (Rajasthan) prints are finished with colour applied by means of the tinsel process and the result is most elegant. Nasik produces beautiful tinsel prints, the characteristic patterns consisting of small floral motifs within diapers or of chequers on a ground of dark colour. A magnificent example of tinsel-printing are the gold-printed *batiks* of the island of Bali.

Tie-dyeing or knot-dyeing or *bandana*, from the Sanskrit *bandhana*, has already been referred to. It is in effect a method of resist-dyeing. Being one of the most remarkable methods of textile decoration, this elaborate process merits a short but succinct description. At one time tie-dyeing was widely practised throughout the country, but gradually it became a particular speciality of Rajasthan, where it is popular even today. The process lends itself to many variations and one of the simplest is where the material is twisted like a rope, tied with cords at regular intervals, and then dipped in the dye. When the cord is untied a striped pattern appears on the material. If stripes of many colours are desired, the process is repeated for each colour.

The *bandana* or *bandhana* dyeing, as it is properly called, is, however, a more intricate process. The designs used in this method generally consist of small spots, but squares, circles, and zig-zag stripes also appear occasionally. The cloth is first folded in halves, quarters or pleats, and then damped and pressed over a block on which the design has been worked out in raised nails or pins which push up the material in the required places. Next, a woman worker or *bandhani* skilfully nips up the raised dots of the pattern with the long nails of her thumb and forefinger and ties them securely with a single length of wax thread carried from point to point. Then the fabric goes to the dyer and is immersed in the lightest of the shades to be used. The knots are then untied and the fabric pressed on to another pattern block, tied in like manner and dyed again in the lightest of the remaining colours to be used.



Printed handkerchief on red and black ground with a kalka *design and a border of* sankhalata *or string of conch shells*

This process is repeated for every shade of colour that is desired. After the final dyeing, when the cloth is spread out, dotted patterns in a medley of colours are found all over the field. Sometimes the *bandhanis* are so skilful that they need no pattern block but tie up the knots in a pattern they have used several times and know well. Along with the tie-dyeing of finished fabrics, tie-dyeing of warp or weft threads or of both is also largely practised in the country. When these threads are woven on the loom, beautiful patterns, wavy lines, zig-zags and floral motifs are produced.

The *bandana* or *bandhana* fabric is of two traditional types—the *gharchola* and the *chunari*. The former is more intricate in design, and usually has a dark ground of red, chocolate, brown or black, while the patterns are in white, red, yellow or blue. Polychrome *bandhanas* with floral motifs are known as *phulwaris* and those in which animal motifs predominate as *sikaris*. The *chunari* is a much lighter garment, the *bandhana* work being scattered over the ground in isolated dots or in dots grouped to form a simple design. In both these kinds elephants, birds, doll-like figures, flowers, and zig-zags are the traditional motifs, closely packed in the *gharchola* and sparingly used in the *chunari*. Jaipur, Kotah and Alwar in Rajasthan

Detail of printed cloth with floral, animal and bird motifs

The central zone of magnificently embroidered shawl from Kashmir

and certain parts of Kathiawar are well known for this kind of work. In Rajasthan and some parts of western India the *chunari* is specially prized as a wedding garment and the *chunari* of light texture is frequently referred to in glowing term in the popular songs current in these parts of India. *Rumals* or handkerchiefs with patterns executed in the *bandhana* technique became very popular in Europe and, taking the fancy of the 'trade', were reproduced in the Manchester mills to supply the demand in India.

An interesting product of weaving with tie-dyed threads and one which has been famous for centuries is the silk *patola* of Baroda and Gujarat. It is the wedding *sari* of the women of Baroda and Kathiawar and is as such highly treasured. *Patola* weaving is an ancient art, its products having been an essential part of the merchandise of Arab traders as far back as the 8th century A.D. The technique was carried to Java and several other regions of South-East Asia where the *patola* also became a special bridal garment.

The *patola* is woven with warps and wefts of silk that have been separately dyed by the *bandhana* or the tie-dyeing process. The warp is first dyed in the lightest colour and marked at fixed intervals. The spaces marked are next tied tightly with cotton thread to prevent the dye from penetrating through. The process is repeated with all the colours to be used in the pattern, the lighter colours being used first and the deepest one being left to the last. The weft is treated similarly "being so tied and dyed that, in the loom, each of its colours may come exactly in contact with the same colour in the warp. The little bundles of warp have next to be arranged on the loom by the weaver, who then takes the little bundles of weft, one at a time, using each in its own place through the design." The technique requires leisure as well as skill and as the process is laborious, only a few well-tried designs are used.

One of the most characteristic designs bears the name of Cambay which was a rich port in ancient days. In this a diaper is produced all over the field by means of intersecting lines. The diamond-shaped spaces thus formed are given a maroon ground and filled in with flowers on dark green stems. The sprays are arranged length-wise and the borders of the *sari* are not always uniform. The pattern of the end-piece usually consists of almost similar sprays hanging from narrow bands, each repeated in two rows. Another well-known type of *patola* goes by the name of *patan*, after the ancient city of Anahilapattana. In this there is no diaper and the pattern is laid sideways. The border strips, also carried within the field, portray a series of elephants, flowering shrubs, human figures and birds, with the feet always towards the centre of the *sari* and not outwards. The ground colour is in dark blue-green with the patterns in red, white and yellow. In yet another form, called after Surat, the background of the border is usually green with a dark red field. Whatever the form, the decorative details are always pleasingly mingled in a harmonious scheme of rich and warm tints, the colours flowing one into the other.

In the decorative methods where the fabric is treated on the loom, various

patterns, from the simplest stripes and chequered fabrics, to the most gorgeous figured and flowered designs, are used. Stripes and chequers are widespread but their arrangements and colour vary from region to region. Cotton, silk and even wool are manipulated in this way. Striped fabrics are known as *doriya* or *salaidar*, the name depending on whether the stripes are longitudinal or across the width of the material. *Are-doriya* is the name for fabrics with diagonal stripes and *khan-jaredar* for those with wavy or zig-zag lines. Chequers are usually called *char-khana* or *chauthai*. These names are almost universal but patterns peculiar to particular regions have their own local names. Designs are often worked out within the stripes and cheques and the various names they carry give an idea of the large variety of patterns current in various parts of the country. Of these *gulbadan*, *bul bul-chashm*, *kalabathi*, *hamsavali kapta* and *hamsavali datapar* are widely known. The first is a fabric of light texture with longitudinal stripes woven into the fabric, the warp being of one and the weft of many colours. Pure silk fabrics of this pattern are known as *asli gulbadan*. *Bul bul-chashm* (i.e. the *bul bul's* eye) is a poetic name for a glazed diaper-patterned textile in which the lozenge shaped spaces formed by the double set of diagonal stripes have a speck in the centre. This speck is often worked in gold thread in silk fabrics. *Kalabathi*, usually produced in and around Burhanpur, is a delicate fabric, with variegated borders interwoven with gold-plated threads. *Hamsavali kapta* is a *sari* of uniform colour with a border of fanciful figures of ducks, fishes, elephants, etc. When such borders are repeated in stripes throughout the body the fabric is known as *hamsavali datapar*. These patterns are no doubt derived from *hamsalakshana saris*, well known in ancient Indian literature, in the old paintings at Ajanta, and in western Indian miniatures. The *hamsavali datapar* fabrics are perhaps the most artistic in central India and the surrounding regions. The variety of patterns produced by the arrangement of stripes and cheques is endless. Textiles with charming patterns in stripes and cheques are woven on the traditional loom in remote hilly regions all over the country.

Among the loom-decorated fabrics of India, the flowered and figured weaves, known as the *jamdanis*, enjoyed world-wide reputation. The *jamdani* has been spoken of as the *chef-d'oeuvre* of the Indian weaver and it is certainly the most artistic article produced in Bengal. These figured and flowered patterns are produced on muslin, and the beauty of the fabrics produced in Dacca is only too well known. Requiring remarkable skill and deft manipulation while the muslin is being woven on the loom, the *jamdanis* differ widely in their flowered and figured patterns, in their treatment and in the techniques employed. Each pattern requires a different mode of treatment. The technique employed in weaving a *jamdani* may be briefly described in the words of Dr. Taylor, who studied it at first hand in the second half of the last century. When the warp threads are arranged "two weavers sit at the loom. They place the pattern, drawn on paper, below the warp and range along the track of the woof a number of cut threads equal to the flowers or parts of the design intended to be made; and then with two small

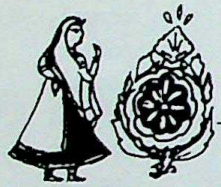
fine-pointed bamboo sticks, they draw each of these threads between as many threads of the warp as may be equal to the width of the figure which is to be formed. When all the threads have been brought between the warp they are drawn close by a stroke of the lay. The shuttle is then passed by one of the weavers through the shed, and the weft being driven home, it is returned by the other weaver. The weavers resume their work with their pointed bamboo sticks, and repeat the operations with the lay and shuttle in the manner above described, observing each time to pass the flower threads between a greater or less number of threads of the warp, in proportion to the size of the design to be formed". The process is no doubt very intricate and one has to see the weavers at work before one can fully appreciate the patience, skill and deftness of hand required for weaving such complicated fabrics.

The most remarkable thing about these art fabrics is unquestionably their rich variety of designs, some of which are clearly of Persian origin. The cone or the *kalka* (locally called *turanj*) is very largely used at the corners and the field is covered with small sprays (*buti*) of flowers like the jasmine (*chameli*), the marigold (*genda*) and the chrysanthemum (*gul daudi*). In the sprays, patterns of small circular dots (*chanda*), stars (*tara*), betel leaves (*pan*) and bouquets of flowers (*tora*) are also used. *Jalar* is the name for the *jamdani* which has floral designs arranged in a network covering the entire field, and *jamewar* for the weave with a pattern of large flowers arranged in rows. Occasionally the sprays are grouped in diagonal lines and are then known as *tircha buti*. *Jamdanis* with running floral patterns covering the entire field are known as *phulwaris* and those with sprays of flowers linked together as *panna-hazara*. Very little colour appears in the field (except a very light blue which is sometimes used) and usually threads of two different textures are used to pick out the patterns. The fineness and intricacy of the designs thus stand out all the more effectively. Sometimes gold and silver threads, and more rarely coloured threads, are used to pick out the design in order to impart greater relief to the surface. The borders usually consist of broad bands of running floral scrolls. Occasionally figure subjects such as horse-riders (*ghorsawar*), *hamsas*, and *mayura-pankhis* (boats shaped like peacocks) gliding down a stream are introduced in the borders. However intricate the patterns, the Dacca weavers have adapted the outline of their designs to the straight lines and right angles of their weaves with admirable skill. No less admirable is their execution, their perfect finish, and the balance and flowing rhythm of the composition, all of which combine to give the Dacca *jamdani* its proud position of a masterpiece among the entire range of Indian fabrics.

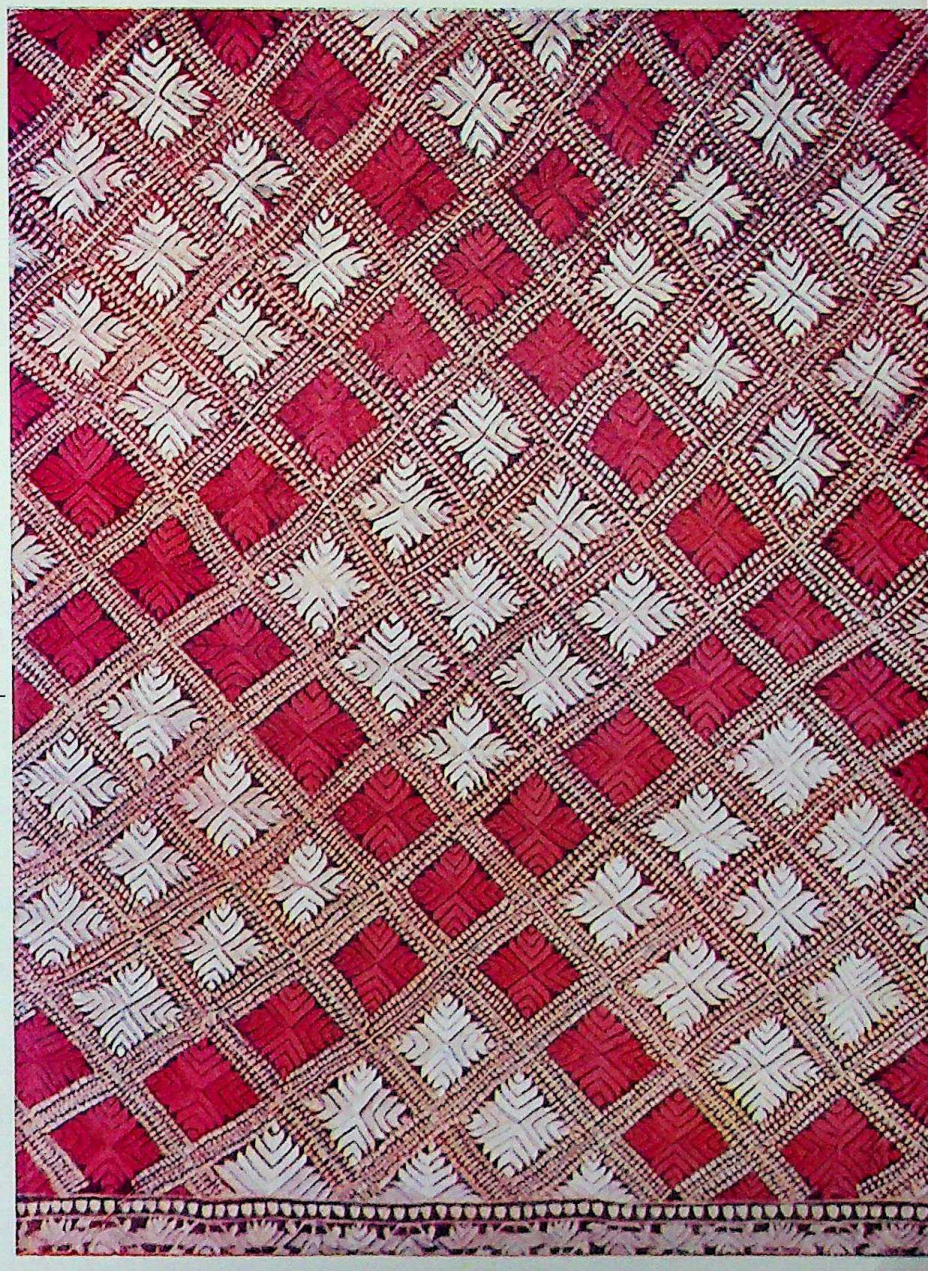
It should be emphasized that the patterns in Dacca *jamdanis* are, like brocades, distinct from and supplementary to those where the weft is thrown on its surface by means of bamboo sticks. Although the term brocade is usually applied to silk fabrics alone, the figured and flowered *jamdanis* of Dacca may also be so described since the technique used is so strikingly similar.

Another part of Bengal has long enjoyed a wide reputation for producing

Embroidered silk from Kutch, with an elaborate pattern of feminine figures alternating with floral motifs and figures of peacocks



Phulkari *from Rohtak with a traditional design of regular diamond-shaped figures*



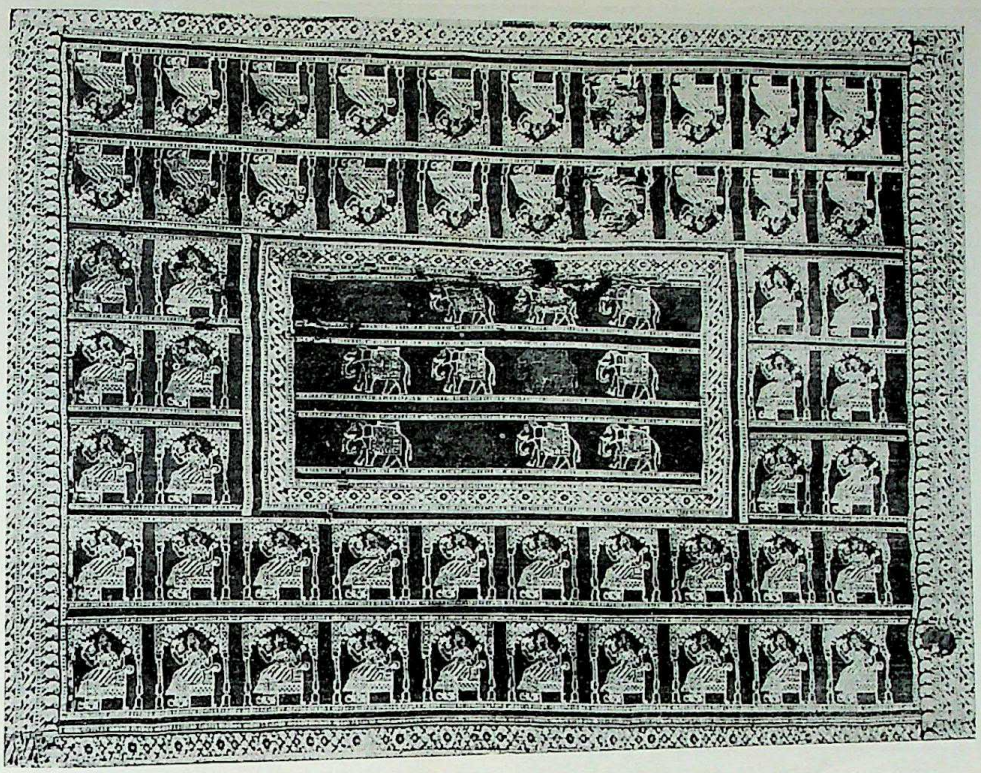
one of the most notable fabrics of India. Baluchar in the district of Murshidabad was the centre of a thriving silk industry in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and has given its name to the figured and flowered *saris* known as Baluchar *butidars*. The industry thrives in a number of villages, of which the most famous is Bahadurpur, the birthplace of Dubraj, the last of the great master-weavers of Baluchar.

The Baluchar *butidars* are silk fabrics in which the figured and flowered patterns are woven on the loom by a special kind of manipulation. The loom does not differ materially from that employed by the Dacca weavers, but the manner in which it is handled to produce the pattern is, to a certain extent, different. To quote from the interesting article on the subject by Sri N. G. Mukherji in the *Journal of Indian Art*, "As a rule there are two *nakshas* for the borders, two for the *buts*, two for the *anchla* or ornamental end-pieces and one for the beginning and finishing up. The draw-boy manipulates a 'harness cord' for the *buts*, the weaver puts in a thread for the *buts*. At the next operation, *viz*. the putting in of a weft thread for the ground the draw-boy does nothing, while the weaver passes the shuttle to put in another weft thread for the ground. At each operation, therefore, time is spent by the weaver not only in his own manipulation, but also in watching those of the boy. For rich designs as many as fourteen *nakshas* are sometimes employed. It is easy, therefore, to imagine how a piece....can take as long as six months for a weaver and his draw-boy to weave."

The Baluchar *butidars* are woven in lengths of five yards with a width of 42 inches. The ground colour is usually deep purple, blue or dark red shot with blue and the patterns are worked out in white, red, orange, yellow or green. The field is covered over with small sprays or *butis*, arranged either in vertical rows or diagonally (*tircha*), with beautiful floral borders running along the edges of the *sari*. It is on the *anchla* or the end-piece that the weaver lavishes most of his skill. Occupying the entire width, this portion is usually between 2 feet to $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet long and is disposed in oblong or rectangular zones, one within the other. The central zone usually encloses within floral borders the *kalka* or cone design, either singly or repeated in a row. On the four sides of this central zone, figure subjects are introduced, sometimes within an architectural setting, each in a separate compartment repeated all around. The sprays are usually floral, although geometrical patterns are also employed occasionally. The figure subjects on the end-piece introduce a pictorial element in the design of these fabrics. Indian as well as European figures appear in these compositions. The commonest motifs are a noblemen or a lady holding a flower, a nobleman or a lady smoking a *hukkah*, a European holding a flower or smoking a *hukkah*, a lady riding a horse and two ladies in conversation. In spite of their rich patterns, the Baluchar *butidars* always avoid strong contrasts, each pattern being traced in a colour which harmonizes with the ground on which it is laid. Small specks of different tints afford relief and the practice of working designs in two shades of the same colour lend a good deal of modulation to the colour-tone. Like the Dacca *jamdanis* the Baluchar *butidars* have long ceased to be produced.

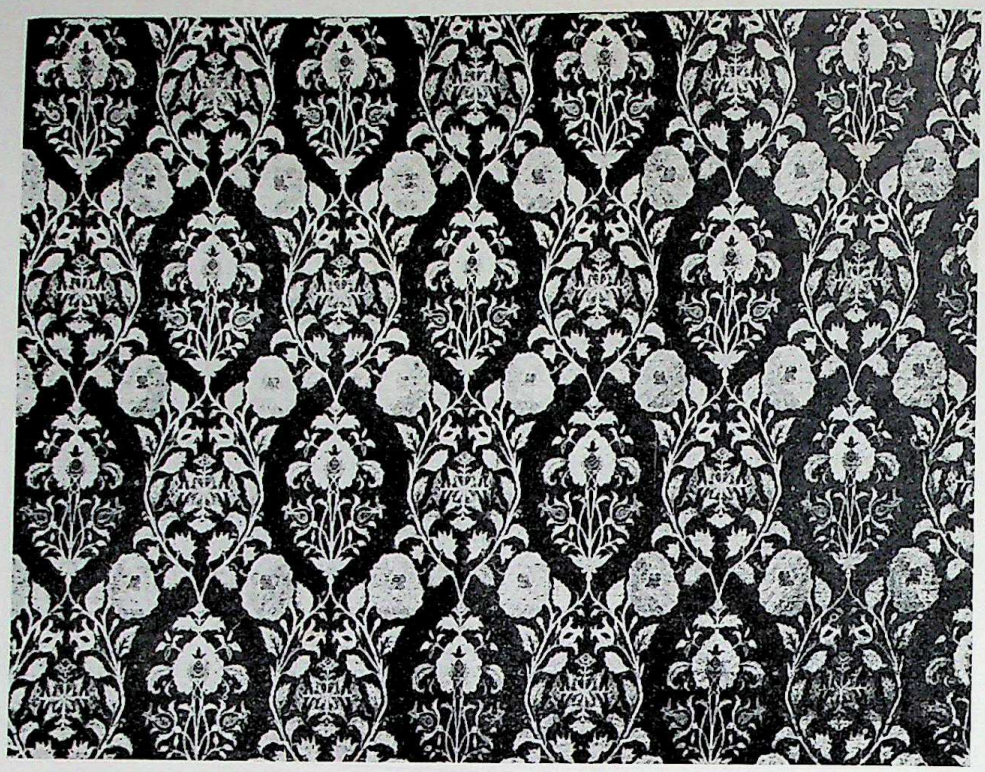
Portion of a brocaded canopy from Surat with an unusuat design depicting figures of Krishna flanked by cows

Striped Bhutan robe with simple but elaborately embroidered patterns



Pallu *of an unusual sari from Baluchar patterned with figures of a princess on a throne and royal elephants*

Amru is usually the name given to Indian brocades in pure silk, where threads are thrust between the warp with the help of small needle-like spools to pick out the pattern on the loom. The pattern is thus distinct from and supplementary to the weft and is thrown on its surface. *Amru* weaving is widespread in India and exquisite fabrics were once produced in a number of places. The designs and patterns used are similar to those associated with *kinkhobs*, or gold and silver fabrics, and it is needless to treat them separately. Mixed fabrics with patterns brocaded in silk over the surface are known as *himrus*, the chief centre of the most characteristic textiles of this kind being Aurangabad. The *himru* is another notable production of flowered textiles and employs a variety of patterns. The cotton from which it is woven is spun so as to form a soft thick fabric that feels like wool. Sometimes woollen yarns are mixed with cotton. It is brocaded in silk threads which form loose masses on the under-surface because they are carried clumsily behind from one point to the other in the design. The ground is of uniform colour, usually green, blue, pale slate, maroon or scarlet, and the patterns are picked out in pink, red, yellow and white, according to the ground colour. One of the most popular designs



Himru *fabric from Hyderabad*

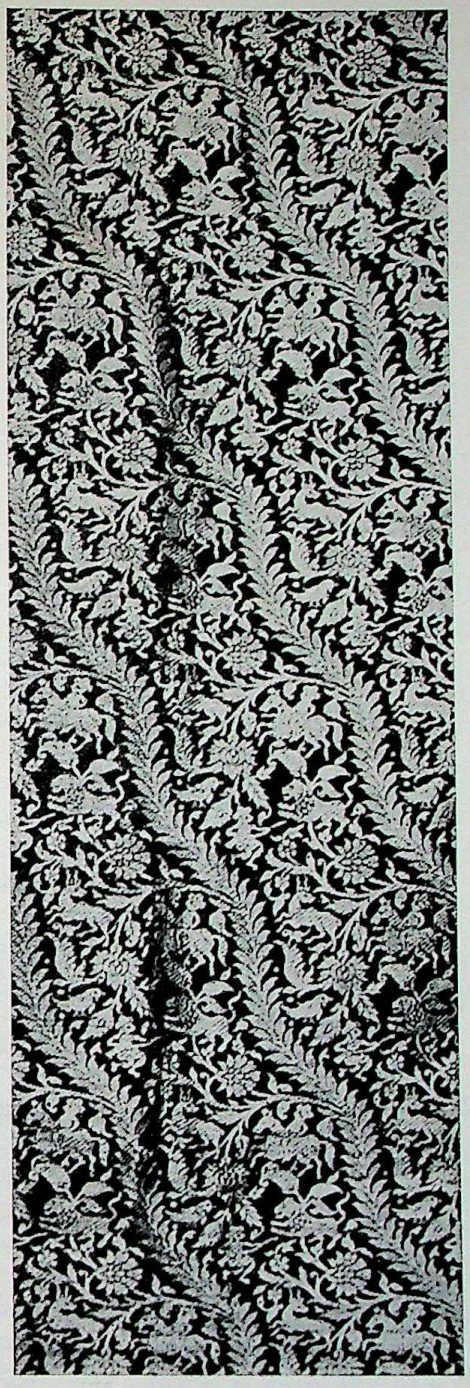
is known as the *jangla*, a foliage motif which is repeated. The *sia jangla* consists of a hanging creeper with flowers and foliage mixed up with miniature cones. Other characteristic floral designs are known as *uda jaldar* and *sukh moni bel*, the patterns of the latter being usually arranged within stripes. On the right surface, the execution is very neat and the rich and warm tones of colour lend these textiles an unusual degree of elegance and grace.

Kinkhobs or brocades worked out in gold or silver thread or silk fabrics occupy a unique position in the wide range of Indian textiles. The gold and silver workers of India are well known for the fineness of the threads they can draw from the metal. Pure gold thread is known as *kalabatan* and cloths of gold are mentioned by Megasthenes as constituting the costumes of Indian princes. The Rigveda also refers to the existence of a gold-woven cloak. This specialized art thus appears to be of very ancient origin, and is clearly indigenous.

Kinkhob ranges from cloths made entirely of gold or silver to materials in which metal threads are used very sparingly. Cloths of pure gold or silver have long ceased to be made, though some exquisite specimens can be seen in old textiles preserved in a few collections.

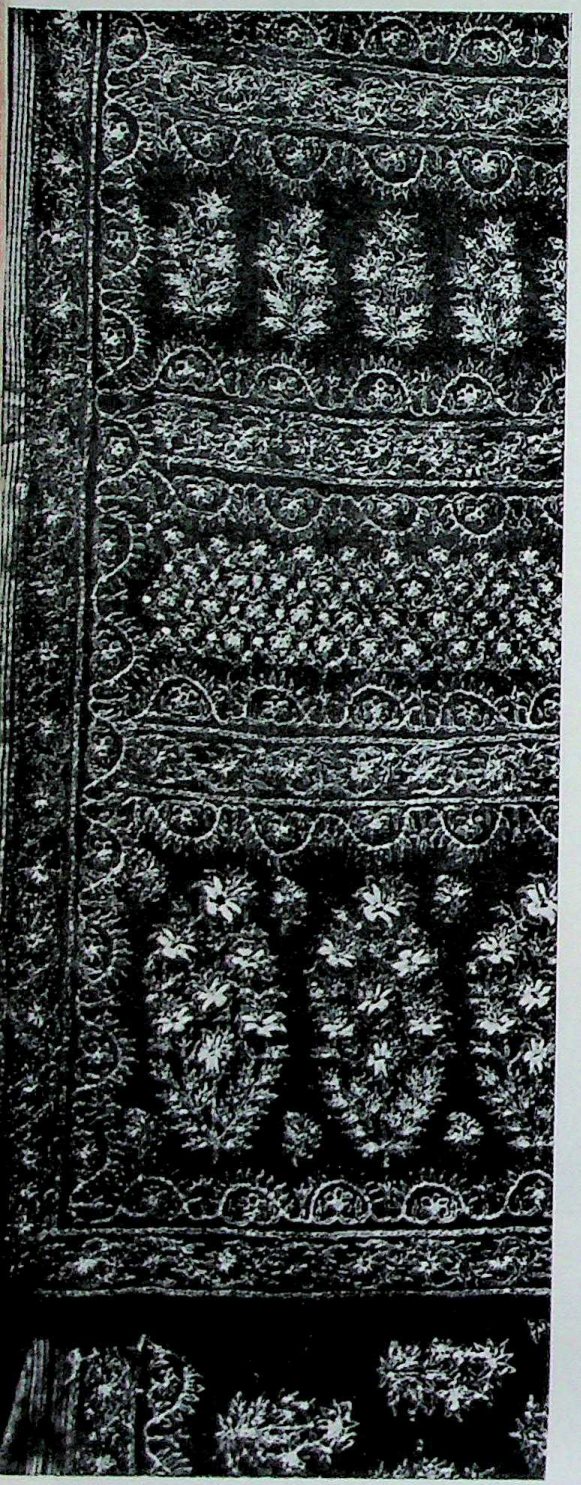
To give body to the *kinkhob* and to afford it a means of colour illumination, the finest wires of pure gold or gilt silver are twisted round a silk thread foundation but this practice does not appear to date further back than the 11th century A.D. By *kinkhob* is usually meant brocade in which gold or silver threads cover the greater portion of the surface, but coloured silks are used here and there to outline or pick out the design. The fabrics are too heavy for garments, and are mainly used for trappings, hangings and curtains. Brocades in which the major portion of the surface is closely woven in fine silk and comparatively less gold or silver threads used are frequently called *baftas* or *pot thans*. Then there are silk brocades where the pattern has only a speck of *kalabatan* thread to illuminate a particular feature of the pattern. The word *kinkhob* is broadly applied to all these fabrics.

The principle of brocading is the most important feature of the art of producing *kinkhobs*. Like brocades, *kinkhobs* are woven on the loom with an additional shuttle or pencil which is carried in and out of the warp threads according to the needs of the pattern. At one time this art, expensive and elaborate though it was, appears to have been widespread in India. The ladies of the Tripura court are known to have practised the art of *kinkhob* weaving as an amusement. The *jarao jamdani* of Dacca is also in fact *kinkhob* both in conception and in purpose. Uttar Pradesh, Panjab, Madhya Pradesh, the Deccan, western India and southern



A brocade from Banaras with scenes from the hunt as the dominant motif in the intricate design

Portion of a red and gold sari *with delicate floral designs*



India are all known to have once had important centres of *kinkhob* weaving. Subsequently, however, the art became localized and Banaras in the north, Ahmedabad and Surat in western India, Hyderabad in the Deccan and Tanjore in the south grew into famous centres of *kinkhob* weaving. The rich and brilliant tones of the silk yarn found in these places are eminently suited for *kinkhobs*.

One finds a large variety of patterns and designs in *kinkhob* fabrics. The most common design consists of the tree of life, cones, diapers, and floral sprays closely compacted into harmonious and pleasing combinations. Banaras is the best-known centre of *kinkhob* weaving and once produced gorgeous textiles, rich in variety and design and splendid in execution. Surat and Ahmedabad, along with the traditional patterns described above, are known to have produced less conventional designs also. Hyderabad in the Deccan manufactured exquisite *kinkhob* pieces with the field chequered or striped with gold threads and the interspaces filled in with various designs in gold, the most usual being the figure of a swan.

Embroidery or the decoration of woven fabrics with coloured threads by means of a needle is probably one of the oldest arts of the world. In India it dates from the remotest period of history. Embroidered garments and needles are mentioned in Vedic texts and the art of embroidery flourishes in all parts of India down to this day.

Since embroidery is a process carried out only after the cloth leaves the loom, much of the restraint involved in weaving a pattern on the loom is removed. Hence it is found to possess individualities and characteristics of the greatest beauty and interest. Indeed, it is easy to see why embroidered work has greater individuality when one compares the shuttle and the needle.

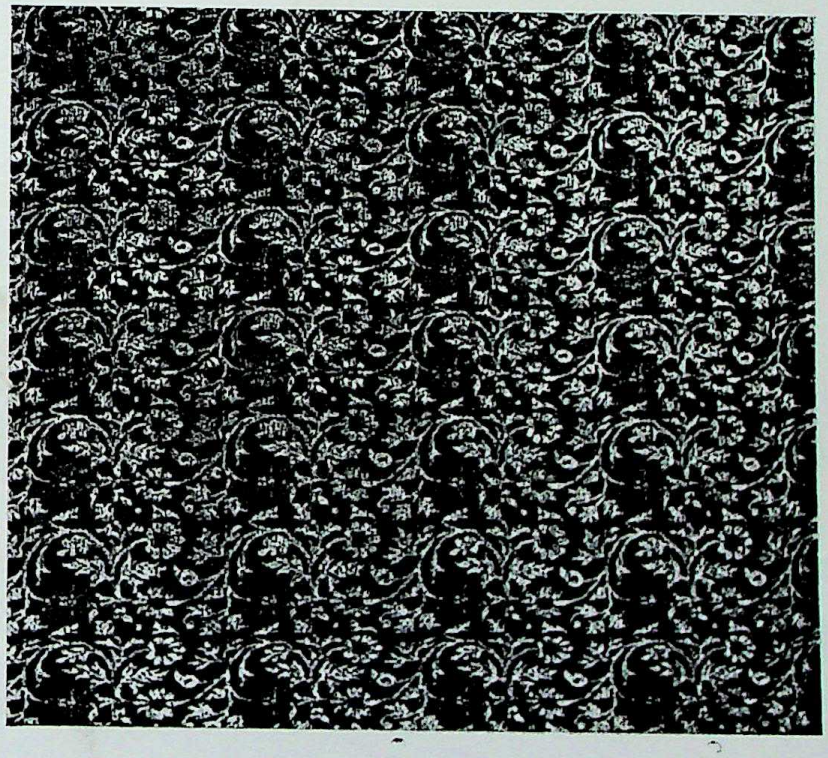
The field that embroidery occupies in India is most extensive, and ranges from the simplest herring-bone patterns of the aborigines to the elaborate figure compositions of Chamba and the intricate *chikan* work of Lucknow. A general view

A silk patola *from Baroda patterned mainly with stylized floral motifs*

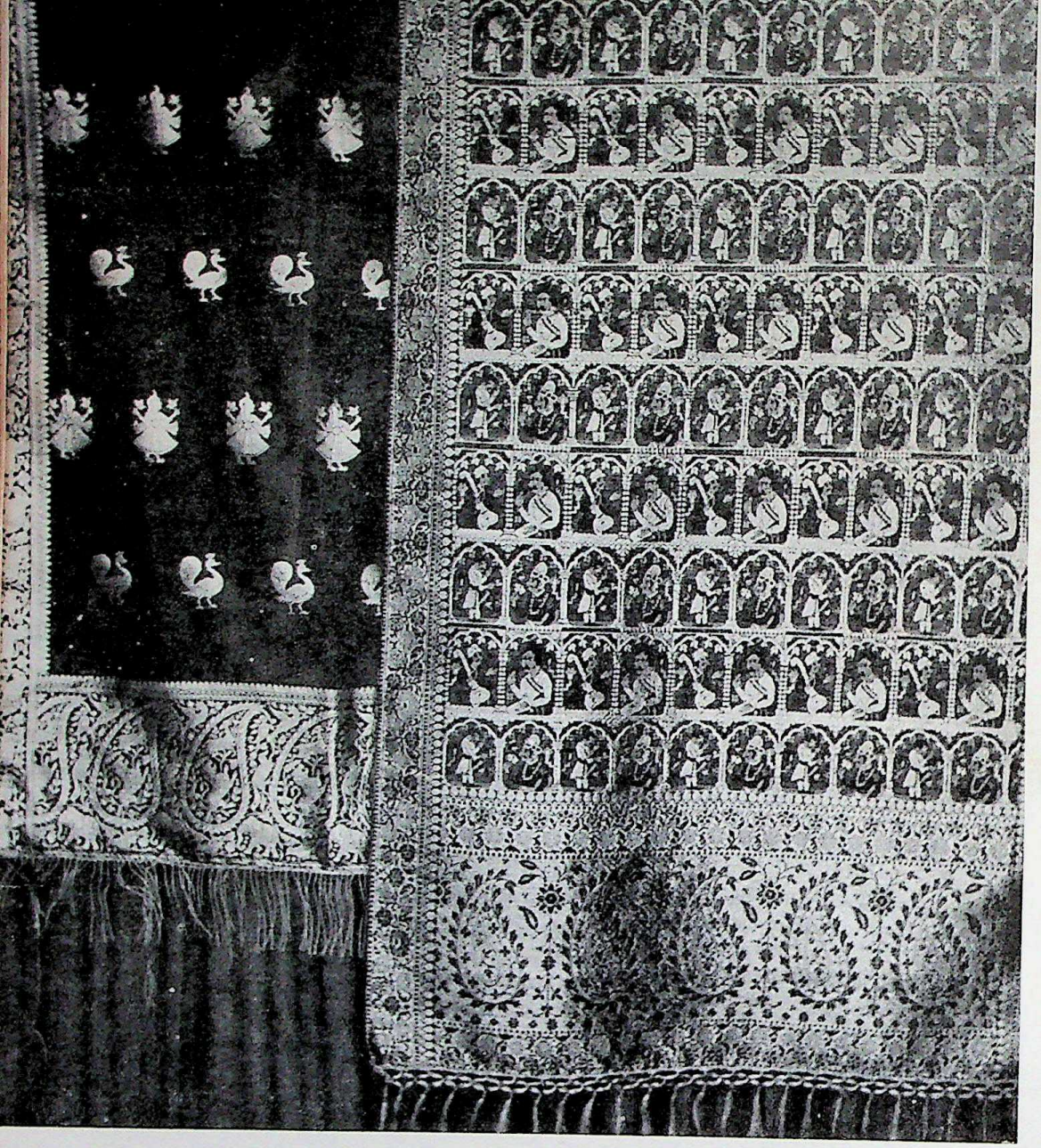
A brilliant printed cotton jajim *from Fatehpur with an elaborately worked design*

of the most important styles of embroidery will also reveal that though needle-work is usually associated with the feminine finger, this great art owes not a little to masculine skill. In Kashmir and Kutch, the two regions most famed for artistic needle-work, it is men who do the work. This is true of many other parts of India also. The art attained its highest development in northern and north-western India, and it is probably more developed among the people of the hills than among those who live in the plains.

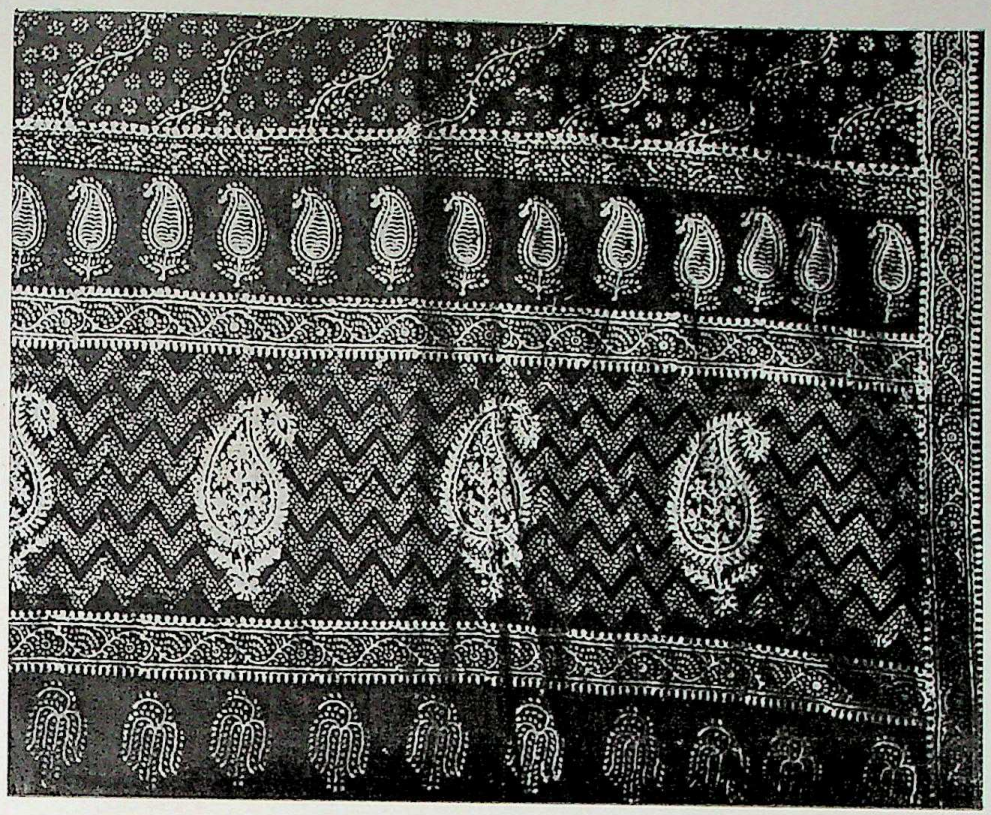
The ground fabric in Indian embroidery is almost invariably of an inferior quality. A very cheap type of cotton or calico often forms the background for the most elaborate and expensive embroidery. Such ground fabrics are usually handspun and hand-woven and it cannot be denied that they have a charm of their own. The thread employed in embroidery is usually of wool or silk, the latter being more frequently used than the former which is confined almost exclusively to the productions of Kashmir. Silk thread, to be adequate for purposes of decoration, has to pass through several simple processes from the raw to the finished state. The Indian embroiderer colours his own thread according to his own ideas of what the design should be. Gold or silver threads are also widely used, particularly in hangings, braidings, trappings, etc., and in garments used for ceremonial occasions. Gold thread embroidery is known in northern India as *kamdani*.



Himru *silk from Hyderabad, patterned with delicate floral sprays*



A Banaras scarf

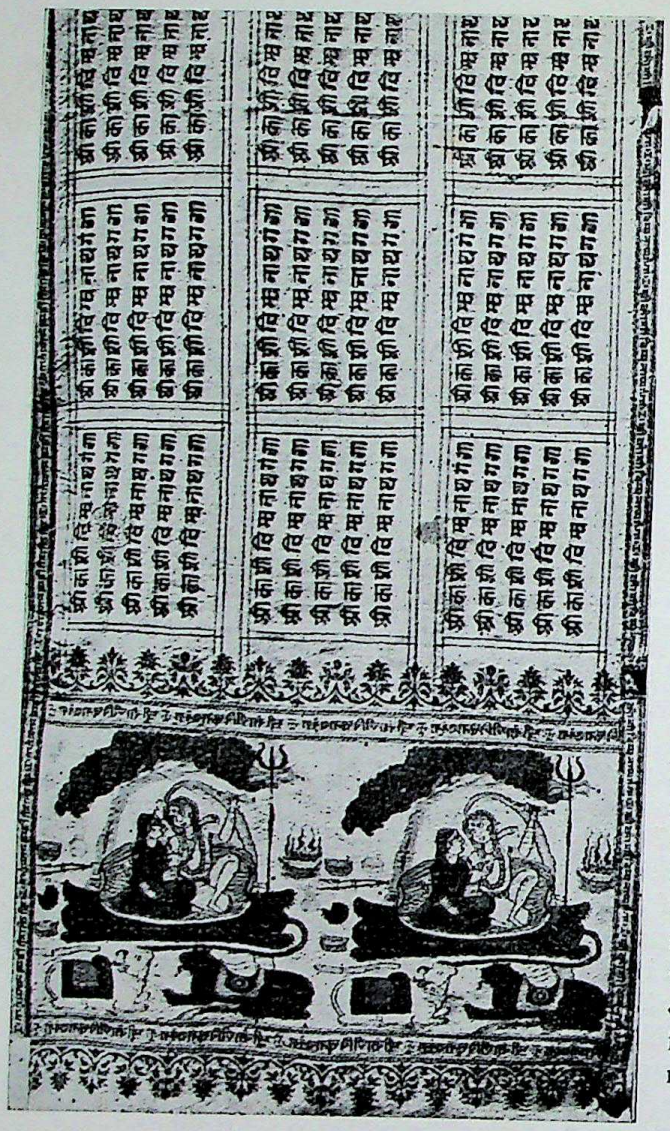


Tinsel-printed dupatta *from Delhi*

The stitches generally used in Indian embroidery are satin, darn, stem and chain. The use of the chain stitch is, however, the most widespread. Many variations of these four principal forms of stitches exist in India and what is known as the *sozni* stitch is unknown outside Asia. This particular stitch which gets its name from the *sozni* embroidery of the North-West Frontier, is formed by a ropy thread of silk and run together diagonally in fine and compact lines to fill up a flat surface. Genuine *soznis* are worked in this stitch, though for many of the more recent examples the chain stitch is used. Another interesting variation, called after the particular style of work in which it is employed, is the *phulkari* stitch "which is purely and simply a darning stitch done entirely from the back", that is, from the wrong side of the fabric. It is interesting to note the small amount of silk expended on the wrong side and the construction of the pattern on the right surface. A double satin stitch employed in the production of the Chamba *rumal* may also be regarded as a typically Indian device to fill in large spaces and to make

the decoration appear identical on both sides of the fabric. Another peculiarity of Indian needle-work, and one which has to a large extent determined the styles of the work produced, is that the needle is drawn from, and not towards, the operator.

A very charming style of embroidery is found in Kathiawar and Kutch, which are reputed for their excellent designs and extremely fine workmanship. There are two quite distinct styles of embroidery in Kathiawar. The first is in elongated satin stitches of purple floss silk covering the entire field of the material which is blue cotton cloth. This form may be said to be the needle-work of the peasant while the second, in chain stitch, that of the upper classes. In the second the ground materials are silks or satins, mostly neutral shades of purple, blue, green and yellow. An assortment of elegant embroidery (on jackets, skirts, handkerchiefs, curtains, etc., magnificently designed and superbly executed, has been produced even in recent times. Kutch is probably the most prolific centre for chain stitch embroidery in India. The typical style of Kutch may be seen in jackets and skirts where the design consists of an unrestrained profusion of foliage, flowers, and birds worked in harmonizing colours. Although such designs are complex and intricate, life seems to pulsate through them and the fine workmanship closely approximates to the world-famous embroidery of China and Japan. The *rumals* are also worked in brilliant colours, but the masses of vivid colours used sometimes fail to satisfy a sober taste. In a rather rare type of work, the design does not flow freely over the whole ground, but consists of figure and flower motifs, which are repeated in orderly rows over the fabric.



A prayer cloth with figures of Shiva and Parvati decorating the base

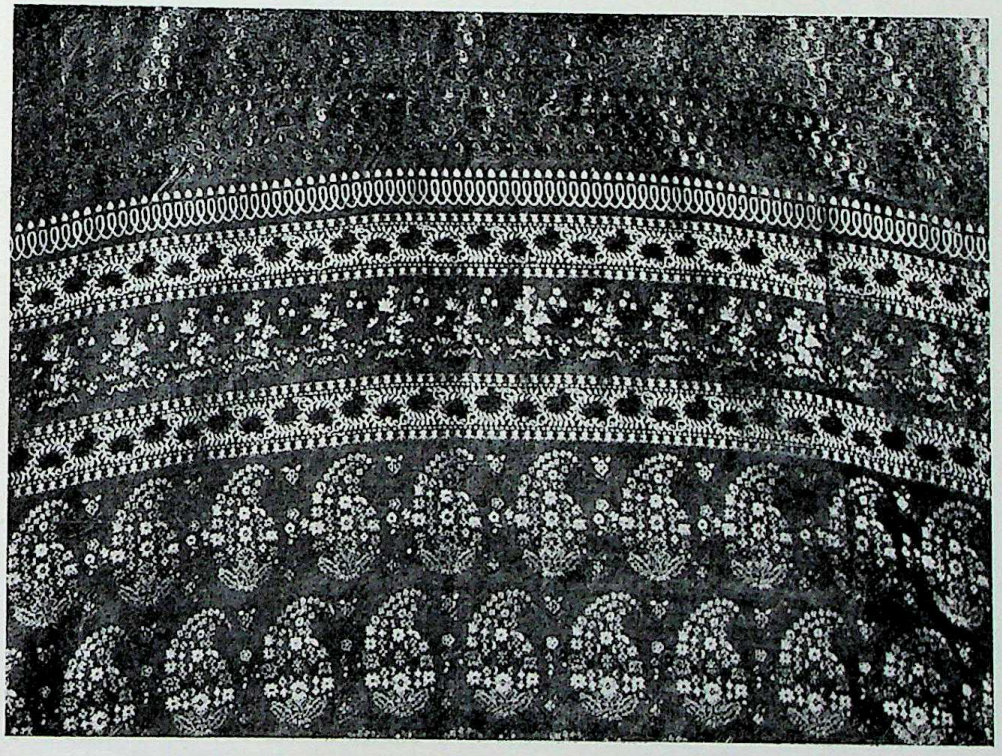
Fascinating forms of embroidery were once found in the *phulkari* work of Panjab, but the style has now degenerated and good examples are extremely scarce.

Embroidered fabric from Sanda with a purely geometrical design

Himru *silk from Aurangabad*

Phulkari means 'flowering work' and might therefore be applied to any embroidery. There are three main types of *phulkari*, the first being the true *phulkari* where the pattern is diapered at intervals, over the cloth. The second is called *bagh* or 'garden' where the whole surface is decorated with a connected pattern. The third type is known as *chobe*, and here the edges alone are embroidered while the centre is left plain. The designs which are almost exclusively geometrical are worked out in a coarse kind of floss silk in a restricted variety of colours on a hand-made cotton fabric. The stitch, which is a simple darn, is worked entirely on the wrong side. The embroiderer plots out the most artistic designs simply by counting the threads from the back, while the pattern takes shape on the right side, unobserved by him. It is a curiously distinctive style of embroidery and is traditional to the Jats. The centre of this interesting art is Rohtak and the surrounding regions, although it is found as far south as Madras. *Phulkari* work has degenerated largely because of the impact of foreign fashions which have brought in their train the practice of pencilling the design before it is worked. The most characteristic feature of the work has thus been lost and consequently the workmanship has also suffered. The

Pallu *of a silk* sari *from Madras with a design worked in gold*



An embroidered robe from Kutch

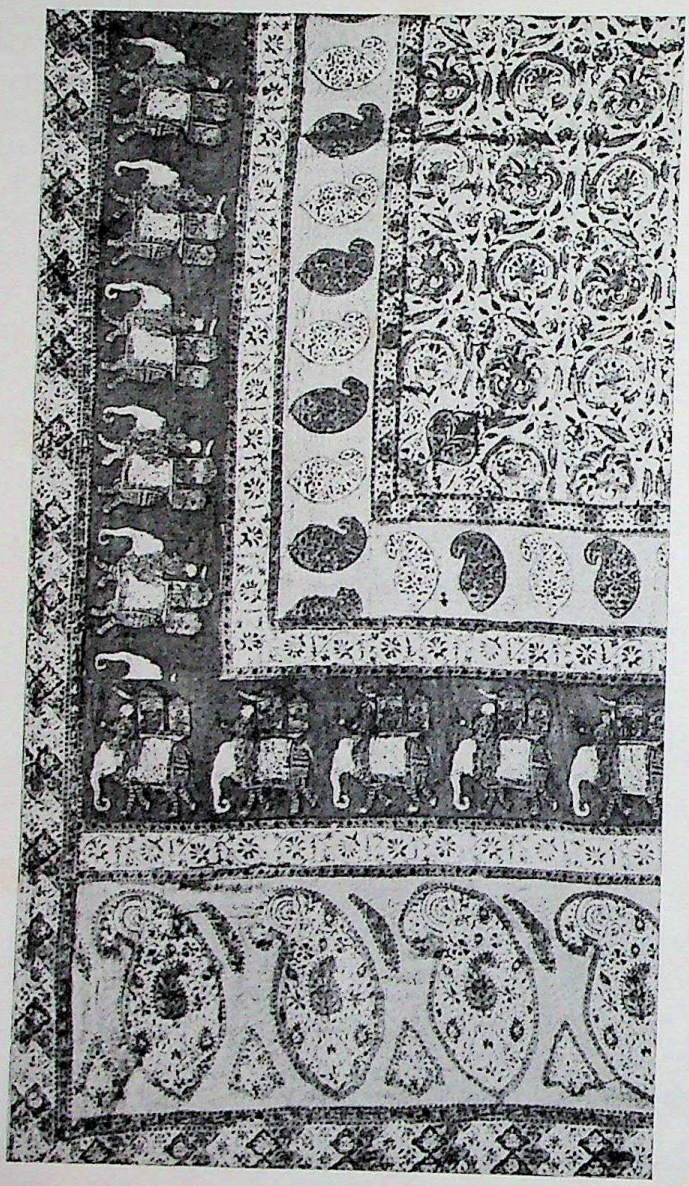
shishadar phulkaris, in which a striking effect is produced by the insertion of small discs of mirror in the design held in position by buttonhole stitches, have a somewhat quaint appearance.

From the hilly region of Chamba in the Himalayas comes another distinctive style represented by the richly embroidered *rumals* or handkerchiefs. It is a purely domestic art, dependent on the social customs of the people. To make a gift of such a piece is customary on festive occasions, particularly weddings. These gifts are treasured by the rich and the poor alike because of the sentiment attached to them. Entirely a domestic product, the execution of such a piece is in every sense a labour of love and it is to this fact that the Chamba *rumal* owes its aura of romance. The designs are derived from mythological subjects, as in the case of Pahari paintings of which these *rumals* may be said to be embroidered counterparts. The typical Chamba handkerchief shows brilliantly coloured flowers, animals, and mythological figures arranged in balanced groups. The ground material is cotton and the patterns are worked out with silk thread in double satin stitch, so that they appear to be identical on both the sides.

Kasida is a famous name in the history of Indian textile products and is associated with Dacca. *Kasida* embroidery is done on gold-coloured *muga* silk in darn stitch and

Tapestry from Masulipatam with kalkas *as the dominant motif*

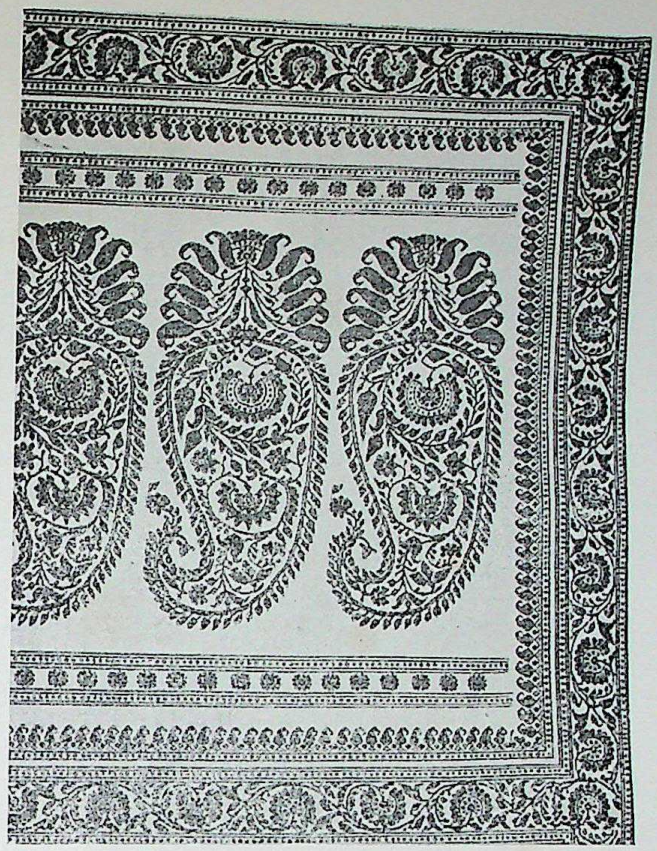
in satin stitch on muslins. The chain stitch has also been employed recently. Charming specimens of *kasida* work are found among the celebrated *nilambaris* of Dacca. Azimganj in the Murshidabad district is famed for its embroidered *kamarbands* (waist-belts) done in satin stitch and these are perhaps the finest examples of this type of work. The workmanship is so fine that it is impossible to detect or single out the threads in the pattern without the aid of a lens. The hill tribes of the eastern borders of Bengal and of Assam produce elegant forms of embroidery which, in spite of their simplicity of design, compare well with the elaborate work of the plains.



Another fine specimen of Masulipatam tapestry

Chain stitch embroidery is widely practised in India and remarkable examples are found both in the north and the south. A distinctive art of Uttar Pradesh is *chikan* work, called the "white embroidery" which probably originated in East Bengal as a corollary to woven *jamdanis*. It is also seen in Bhopal, Madras and several other places. However, Lucknow is the chief centre of this art, and has produced work of remarkable beauty and distinction. The patterns, printed from wood blocks in a washable colour, are worked in white, often in combination with drawn thread work. There are many types of *chikan* work, ranging from the simple *taipchi* done in darn stitch to the elaborate *jali* where lace-like trellises are produced by working very fine buttonholes. *Bakhia* work constitutes an inverted satin stitch in which the designs are merely outlined

on the right side of the fabric. Compact masses of thread are then worked on the wrong side so that the design appears to be opaque. An exceedingly intricate kind of applique work, called the *khatao*, is sometimes used to elaborate the pattern in so skilful a manner that it looks like embroidery to the naked eye. Minute satin stitches are used to produce raised work resembling French knots, one-sixteenth or one-twentieth of an inch in size. These knots are arranged so as to fill in the pattern and represent one of the most graceful developments of Lucknow embroidery. Much of the fine *chikan* embroidery is now done on articles suitable for foreign consumption.

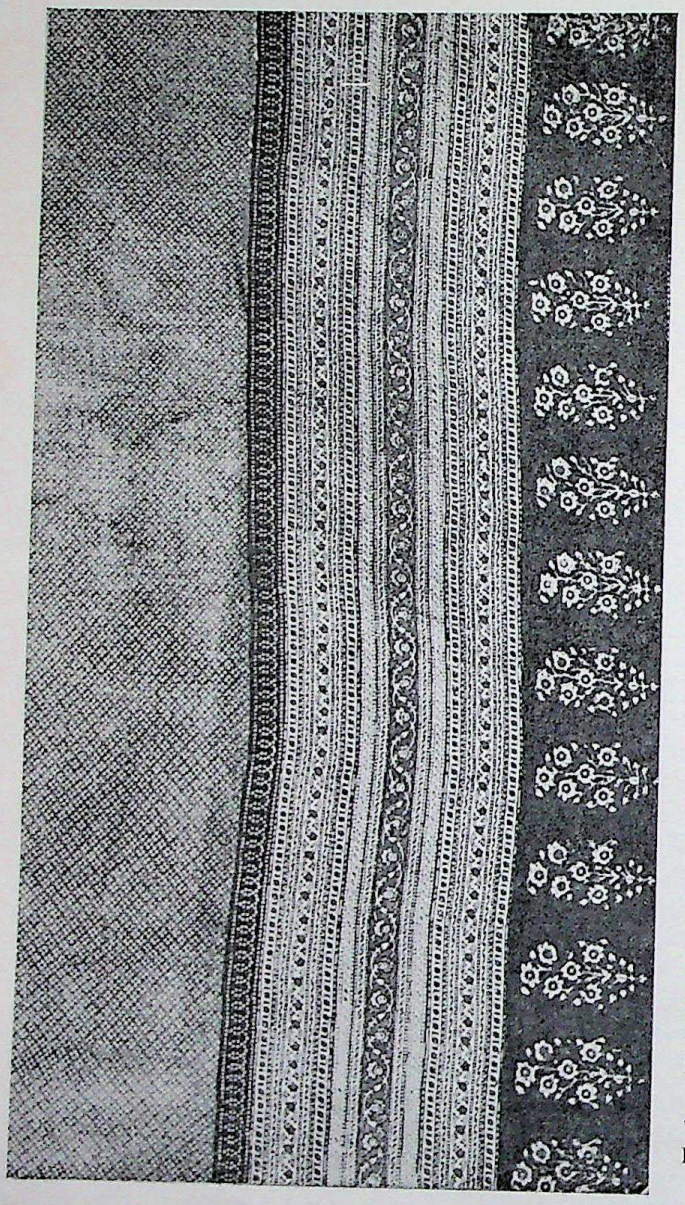


Detail of a Baluchar sari *with embroidered* kalkas

No discussion of embroidery can be regarded as complete without a reference to the *kanthas* of East Bengal which are a class by themselves. Like *phulkaris* they are made primarily for domestic use and represent a folk expression of the embroiderer's art, in contrast to the *chikan* which is its most sophisticated manifestation. The *kanthas* are really quilts embroidered in a variety of designs. The ground is prepared by darn stitches, and the threads are drawn across the layers so close to one another that the entire field appears to be rippled. The designs are symbolic in character and have a close affinity to the *alpana* or rice-paste decorations customary on religious and festive occasions. The central design is usually a lotus, with a variable number of petals, and the field is interspersed with diverse patterns, the most recurrent being the tree of life, conventional figures of animals, birds and fishes, mythological groups, boats, chariots, *kalkas* and so on. The borders consist of floral scrolls, creeper designs, spirals, vortices and many other such linear devices. The threads used are taken out of the borders of discarded *saris*, and the colours mostly used are red, blue, yellow, green and black, all of faded shades.

The designs are conventional and are freely balanced not only with one another but also with the rippled surface on which they are laid. The effect produced is charming though somewhat naive and some of the more variegated pieces have a distinctive pictorial beauty.

Of all the Indian textiles none excels the beauty of colour, texture and design of the richly patterned shawls of Kashmir. Shawl-weaving is common in the north-western part of India, but it is in Kashmir that it has reached its highest development. Much has been written on these fascinating fabrics and it will suffice for us to refer only to the principal trends. The shawl is a fabric woven from the underfleece of a species of goat, a fine variety of wool called *pashm*. Sometimes, as in Rampur *chadars*, the yarn for the warp is woollen and that for the weft a specially prepared silk. The patterns, also in wool, are either woven (*tili or kanikar*) or embroidered (*amlikar*), but in the finished product it is difficult to distinguish between the two. Sometimes the two processes are combined. Whether woven or embroidered it is almost always made of small pieces, separately prepared and joined together so skilfully that the seams are scarcely visible. In the process of weaving, the patterns are worked out as loom tapestries in which the additional needle is known as the *toji*. Where the two processes are combined, the material is first woven on the loom with a broad effect of broken colour and afterwards touched up and defined to a greater or lesser degree by the embroiderer's



Pallu *of a printed cotton* sari
from Kaira

needle. The stitch employed in embroidery is invariably a form of parallel darning, where the thread is allowed only to nip up the loops of the warp and occasionally to penetrate the texture.

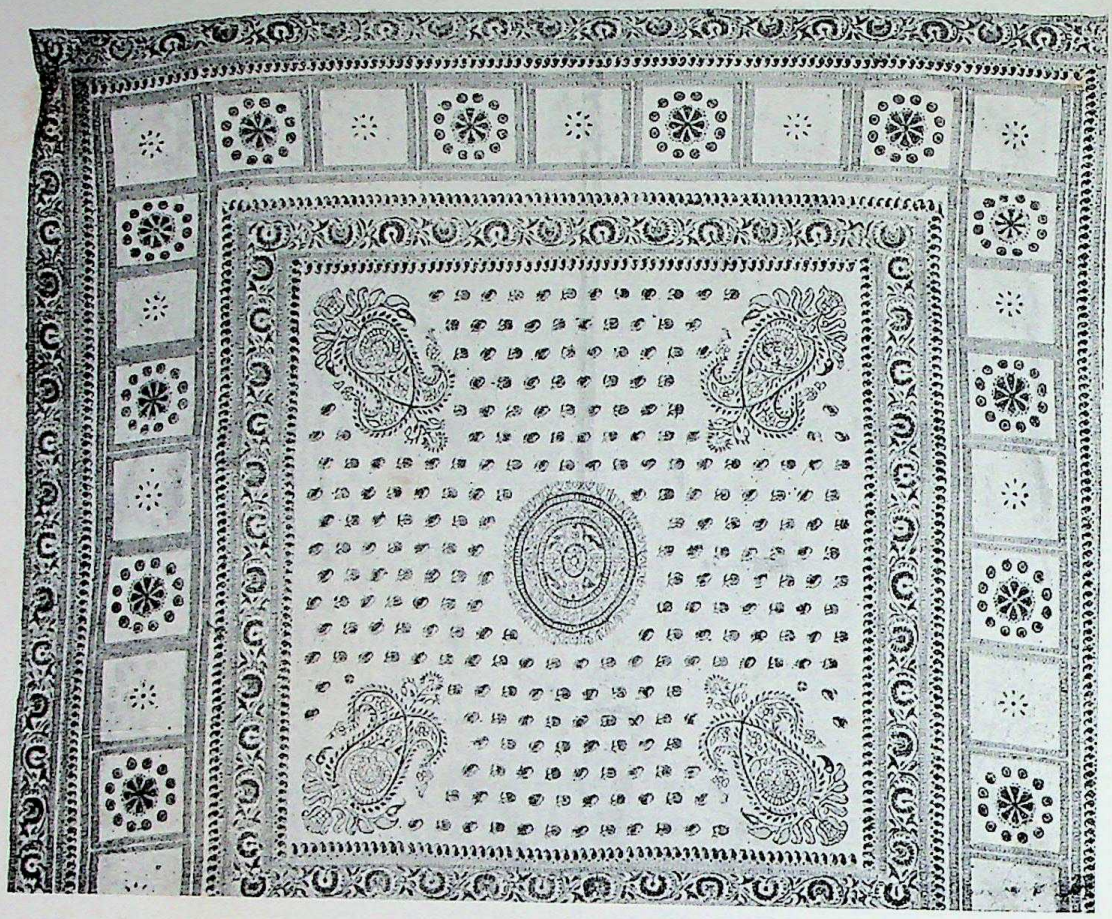
The shawls exhibit an extensive variety of patterns and forms which it would be difficult to enumerate. A wide range of motifs and patterns and a characteristic richness and magnificence are peculiar to this art. A recurrent motif is the *kalka* (cone, or flame or wind-blown cypress as it is variously called) with its tip deflexed towards the left and only rarely to the right. Because of its conspicuousness in the design of a shawl this motif is also popularly known as the 'shawl pattern'. The field is often densely packed with minute floral and foliar motifs, and occasionally figure subjects and architectural settings are also introduced. The colours are chosen to harmonize with the ground and with one another so that the finer examples of this work look like paintings. Sometimes, the pattern is worked in such a manner as to appear the same on both sides, and when this is so the fabric is called a *dorukha*.

Besides shawls, mention should also be made of *jamewars* which are pieces of fixed lengths required for the manufacture of garments. They are either brocaded or embroidered. The ground is pure wool or a fabric of mixed yarn and the patterns are worked in wool or silk. *Jamewars* exhibit an infinite variety of design.

The old shawls represent the highest form of craftsmanship combined with incredible patience, untiring labour and an aesthetic sense of a very high order. Assigning, choosing the colour scheme, and plotting the weave according to the needs of the design require a greater gift than that of a mere craftsman. The finest specimens of *jamewar* work, with their harmonious design and composition, and their soft and delicate tints are permeated by an intense artistic feeling unequalled by any other class of textiles. However, the manufacture of the typical loom-patterned shawl has long ceased and what now remains of the embroidered ones is also in a degenerate state.

The above survey, though cursory, will no doubt give an idea of the magnificence of our textile tradition. The range and variety of Indian fabrics is immense. Every technique and every mode, from the simplest to the most complicated, have been practised for centuries and in every class there are not a few artistic forms and designs which have received unstinted admiration the world over. The patterns and designs in all types of Indian fabrics display an instinctive sense of proportion, a rhythmic harmony of line and curve and a sensitive eye for colour.

Unfortunately, decadence has set in everywhere and most of the forms and modes are long past their days of splendour. The impact of foreign rule and the consequent change of fashions and tastes have no doubt proved disastrous to every indigenous industry. The machine has supplanted the hand-loom, which was the mainstay of beautiful textile forms. It is true that the hand-loom cannot compete with the machine, but if the latter is discarded, a splendid heritage will be lost for ever. About the beginning of this century an Englishman, a noted authority on



An elaborately patterned embroidered sari *from Murshidabad with red and yellow patterns sprayed on a blue ground*

Indian industrial arts, deplored the fact that the Indian takes no stock of his own artistic and cultural tradition and goes in for 'European elegance'. However, no amount of 'European elegance' or inventiveness has been able to equal, not to say excel, the charming textile forms of India. The innate genius and skill of the traditional craftsmen still exists, and what is required more than anything else is a change in outlook which would enable one to love, understand and cherish one's own artistic heritage.

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